

# MBTA COMMUNITIES

ZONING FOR MULTIFAMILY HOUSING IN ARLINGTON

Public Meeting #1: 11/17/22

Town of Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development

# MBTA COMMUNITIES

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About  
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Section 3A  
and DHCD  
Guidelines

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Why  
Compliance  
Matters

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Planning  
Timeline

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Locating  
our  
District(s)

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Discussion  
and  
Q+A



# TONIGHT'S MEETING

Meeting objectives and protocol

# MEETING OBJECTIVES

After tonight, we hope you will understand...

The basics of  
MGL Ch. 40A,  
Section 3A:  
MBTA  
Communities  
legislation

How DHCD  
guidelines apply  
to Arlington

What's at stake if  
Arlington does or  
doesn't comply  
within certain  
timelines

The planning  
process timeline  
and when we\* will  
be reaching out.

That we're here to  
listen. This  
meeting is about  
starting a  
conversation  
about zoning for  
multifamily  
housing.

\* DPCD, MBTA Communities  
Working Group comprised  
of resident volunteers,  
technical consultants

# MEETING PROTOCOL



**Comments and questions are welcome** in the chat, although we may not be able to respond during the presentation. Please be kind to us and others.



**We don't have all the answers**, but we'll try to find them. This is new legislation and we're working alongside you to understand what it means for Arlington.

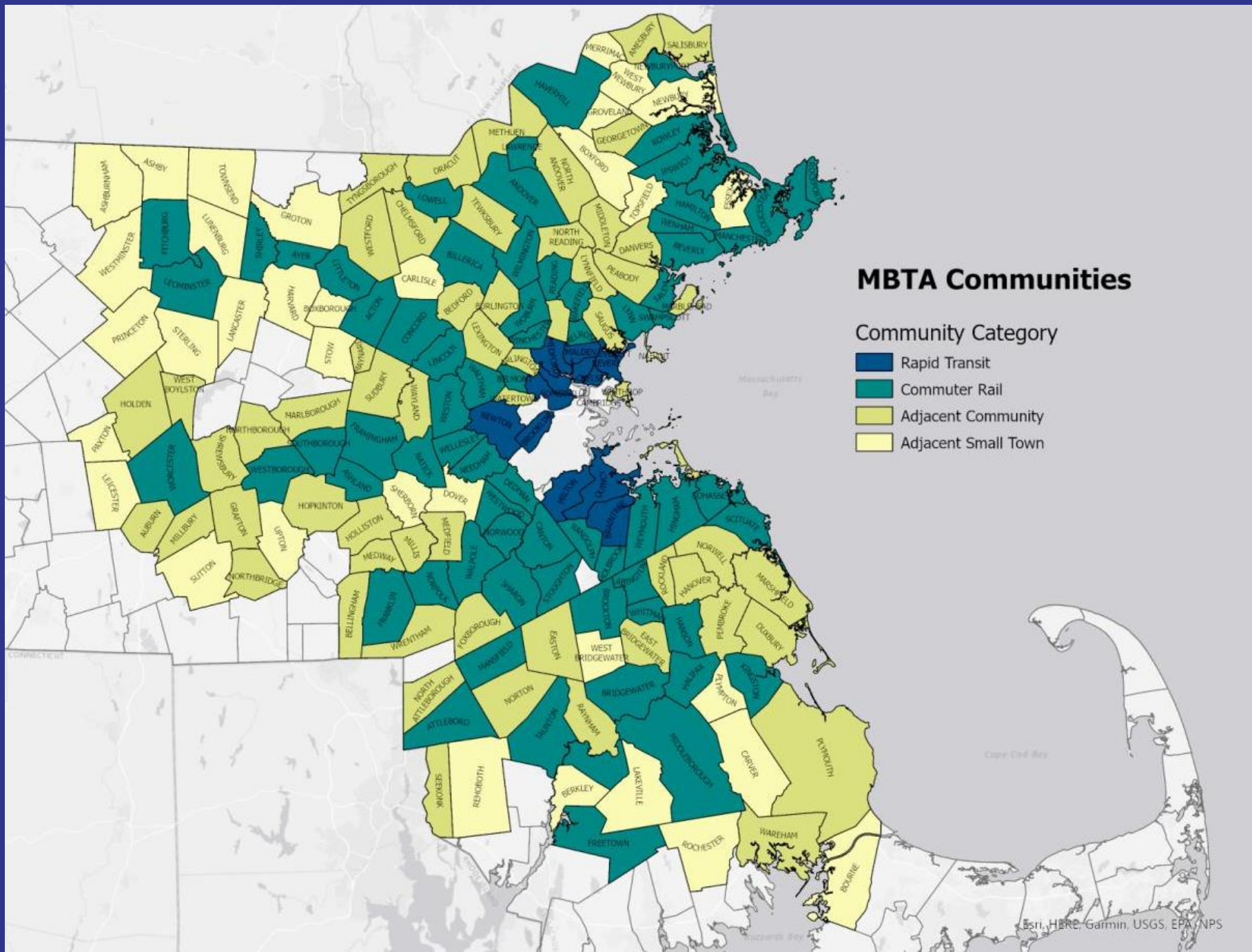


**Let's be curious.** Help us try to find ideas and answers. What benefits can we achieve through compliance? What community values can be uplifted?

# 2

## LEGISLATION AND GUIDELINES

The Section 3A assignment







(a)(1) An MBTA community shall have a zoning ordinance or by at least 1 district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is *permitted as of right*; provided, however, that such multi-family housing shall be without age restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children. For the purposes of this section, a district of reasonable size shall: (i) have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, *subject to any further limitations* of section 40 of chapter 131 and title 5 of the state environmental code established pursuant to section 13 of chapter 21A; and (ii) be located not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.

(b) An MBTA community that fails to comply with this section shall not be eligible for funds from (i) the Housing Choice Initiative as described by the governor in a message to the general court dated December 11, 2017; (ii) the Local Capital Projects Fund established in section 2EEEE of chapter 29; or (iii) the MassWorks infrastructure program established in section 63 of chapter 23A.

(c) The department, in consultation with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, shall promulgate guidelines to determine if an MBTA community is in compliance with this section.



# ARLINGTON + DHCD GUIDELINES



Community  
categories



Capacity



“Reasonable  
size” criteria



District  
location



Incentives\*

\*Not entirely a component  
of DHCD guidelines

# ARLINGTON + DHCD GUIDELINES



Community  
categories



Capacity



“Reasonable  
size” criteria



District  
location



Incentives\*



Arlington is now  
an **“adjacent”**  
community

# ARLINGTON + DHCD GUIDELINES

1

Community  
categories



Arlington is now  
an **“adjacent”**  
community

2

Capacity



10% of total  
housing units, or  
**2,046 units**

3

“Reasonable  
size” criteria

4

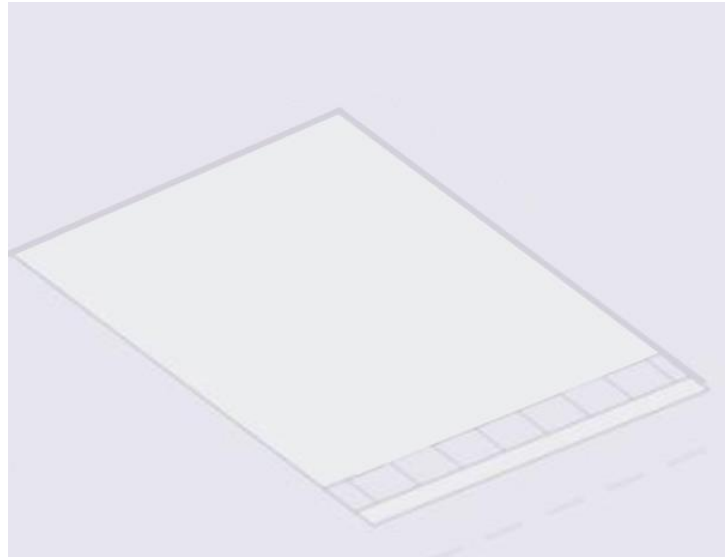
District  
location

5

Incentives\*

# CORE CONCEPT: “CAPACITY”

Existing use: duplex → Treat or count as an undeveloped parcel → Evaluate for what could be built by right under zoning: fourplex



**IMPORTANT!** To determine the unit capacity of a new or existing multi-family zoning district, you do not “count” existing units—you instead determine how many multi-family units the zoning district would allow by right on that parcel if it were undeveloped.

# ARLINGTON + DHCD GUIDELINES

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**2,046 units**

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“Reasonable  
size” criteria



Reduced to **32  
acres**

4

District  
location

5

Incentives\*

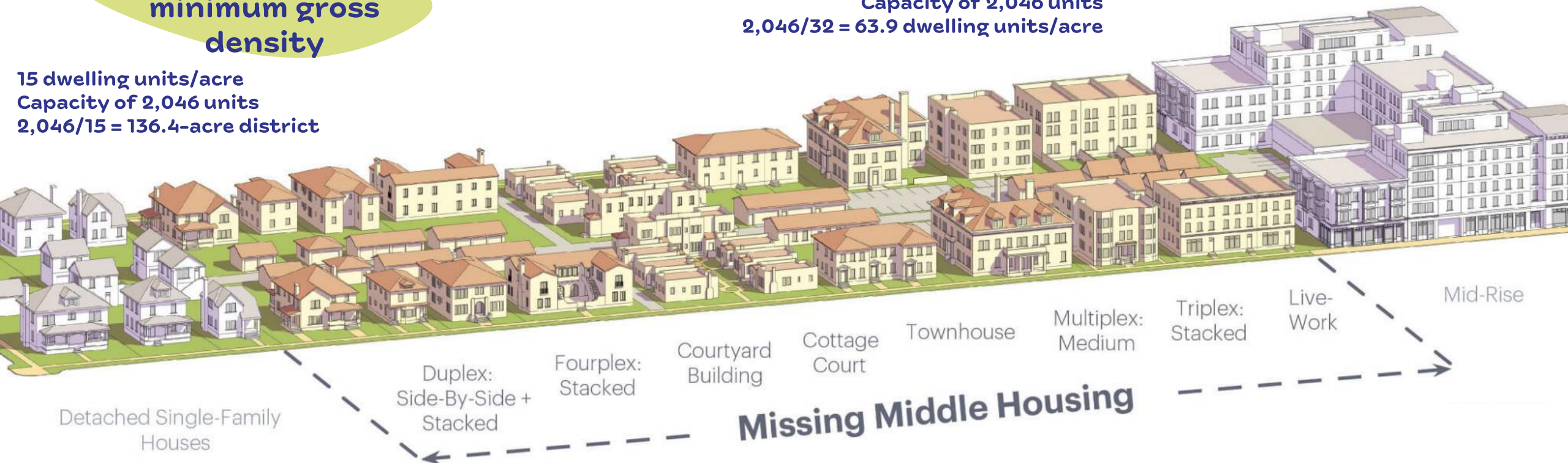
# CORE CONCEPT: VISUALIZING DENSITY

Larger districts or  
minimum gross  
density

15 dwelling units/acre  
Capacity of 2,046 units  
 $2,046/15 = 136.4$ -acre district

Smaller district or higher  
density sub-districts

32-acre district  
Capacity of 2,046 units  
 $2,046/32 = 63.9$  dwelling units/acre





# CORE CONCEPT: VISUALIZING DENSITY

**Triple Decker**  
**3 units**  
**Gross density: 11-30 du/acre**



**Fourplex: Stacked**  
**4 units**  
**Gross density: 14-22 du/acre**



**Multiplex building**  
**5-16 units**  
**Gross density: 10-50 du/acre**



**Courtyard building**  
**6-25 units**  
**Gross density: 21-56 du/acre**





# ARLINGTON + DHCD GUIDELINES

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“Reasonable  
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Reduced to **32  
acres**

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District  
location



**Arlington gets to  
choose location**  
(0% required to be within ½  
mile of Alewife)

5

Incentives\*

# MGL C. 40A SECTION 3A

# GUIDELINES

At least one district  
*of reasonable size*



Minimum 32 acres

Multifamily housing permitted  
as of right



Building with 3+ residential  
dwelling units

No age restrictions; suitable for  
families with children



No age restrictions or bedroom  
limits in zoning

Minimum gross density of 15  
units/acre



Capacity for 2,046 units

Not more than ½ miles from a  
subway station or bus station,  
*if applicable*



District(s) must be at least 5  
contiguous acres; recommended  
location along transit corridors and  
commercial centers

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

## Site Plan Review

- Can require site plan review for as-of-right multifamily uses
- Should not impose unreasonable requirements or undue delay on proposed projects

## Affordability

- Up to 10% at 80% AMI or
- Up to 20% with DHCD approval (e.g., our 15% inclusionary zoning policy may apply because it predates Section 3A)

## Local Requirements

- Cannot require multifamily housing to meet higher energy efficiency standards than other uses
- Cannot require multifamily housing to be combined with commercial or other uses as part of a single project, but can provide bonuses for mixed-use



# WHY COMPLIANCE MATTERS

Funding, the Fossil Fuel Ban Pilot Program, and More

# CORE CONCEPT: INCENTIVES

By complying with MBTA Communities legislation, Arlington would remain eligible for funding from...



MassWorks Infrastructure Program



Housing Choice Initiative



Local Capital Projects Fund

... and, if is zoning adopted next fall, can participate in



MA Clean Energy Law Pilot Program

# ARLINGTON'S "FOSSIL FUEL BAN"

## STM 2020

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Article 5, "Fossil Fuel Ban", approved by 92% of TMMs (225-18)

Home Rule Legislation to allow Town to restrict new fossil fuel infrastructure

Impacts new buildings and major renovation

## New Climate Law

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In August, Gov. Baker signed "Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind" bill into law.

Allows Arlington to participate in pilot program *IF* Town meets a stated inclusionary housing policy by January, 2024

## Requirements

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Inclusionary housing policy must be met:

- 10% of total housing units are on SHI
- Compliance with MBTA Communities

# WHY COMPLIANCE MATTERS

By allowing multifamily housing near transit or services, we can accomplish goals laid out in several recent plans\*.

The result is:



Better access to work, services, and other destinations by increasing mobility and utilization of public transit



More housing closer to the places that we go every day, such as local shops, jobs, schools, restaurants, parks, etc.



Increased demand for locally-serving retail and transit services in walkable neighborhoods



Reducing reliance on single occupancy vehicles, which helps our larger effort to confront the climate crisis



Housing choice for empty nesters who want to downsize, adult children who want to live in town, first-time homeowners, etc.

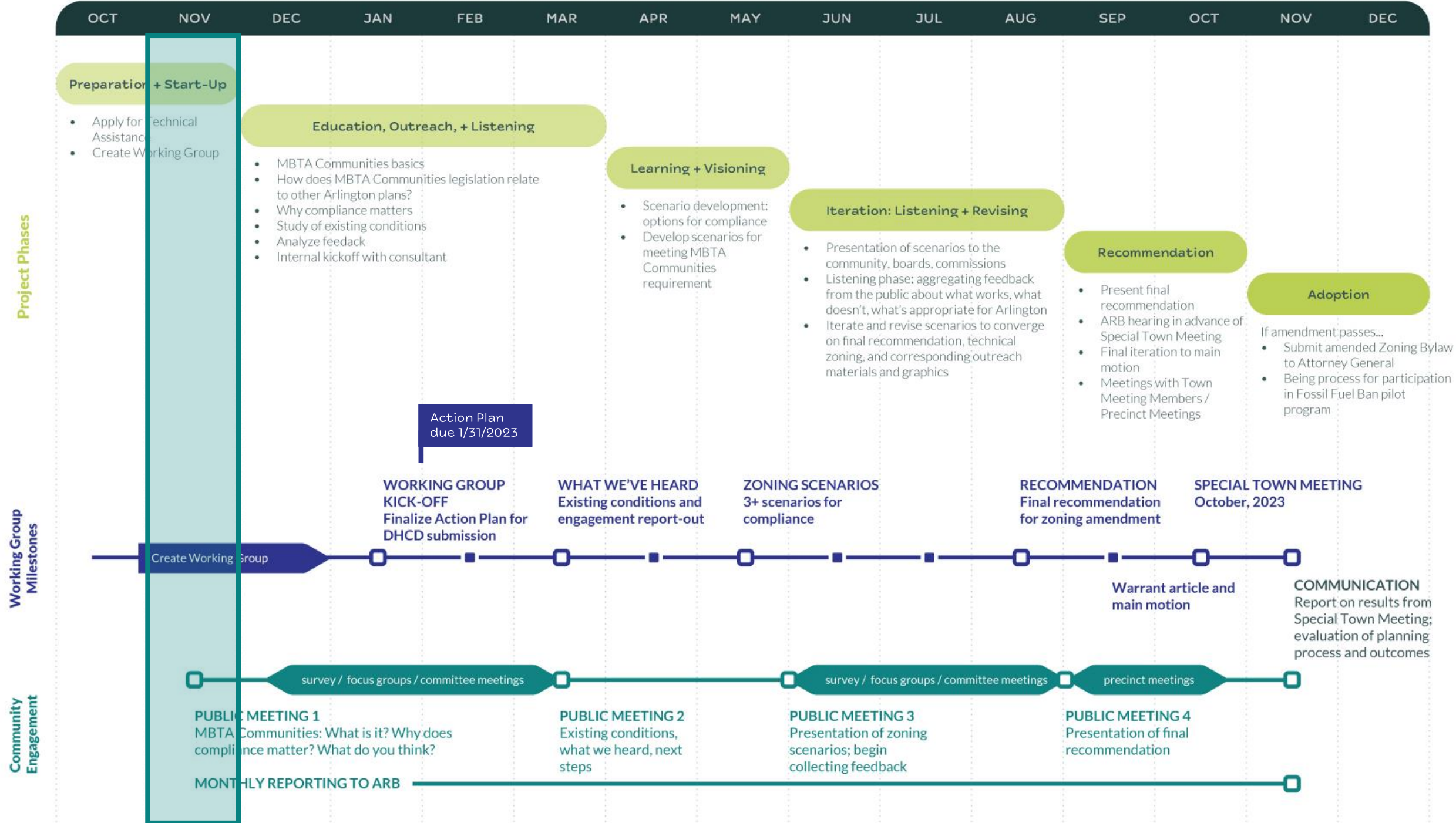
\* Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, Net Zero Action Plan, Connect Arlington, Fair Housing Action Plan, Affordable Housing Trust Action Plan





# TIMELINE

Planning process and compliance schedule



# IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

## Working Group

- Two ARB members
- 1 to 3 residents, preferably with zoning or planning experience
- 1 resident with communications/PR experience
- DEI Engagement Coordinator, Teresa Marzilli
- DPCD Staff

## Communications

- Town-wide survey and comment form
- Town web page for MBTA Communities planning project
- Create FAQ based on tonight's feedback and other questions

## Action Plan

- Working Group approval of action plan
- Submit action plan to DHCD by 1/31/2023 to maintain compliance



# LOCATING OUR DISTRICT(S)

What considerations could or should be made regarding  
Arlington's district(s) location?

# OUR UPCOMING CONVERSATION: WHAT ARE OUR MULTIFAMILY PRIORITIES?

Encourage transit  
and/or bicycling use?

Preserve commercial  
and industrial  
spaces?

Incentivize  
additional  
affordable  
housing?

Achieve goals from  
other plans through  
MBTA compliance?

Spread access  
across different open  
spaces, schools,  
services?

Allow conversion of  
large homes to 3+  
unit housing?

Incentivize more  
mixed use and/or  
neighborhood commercial?

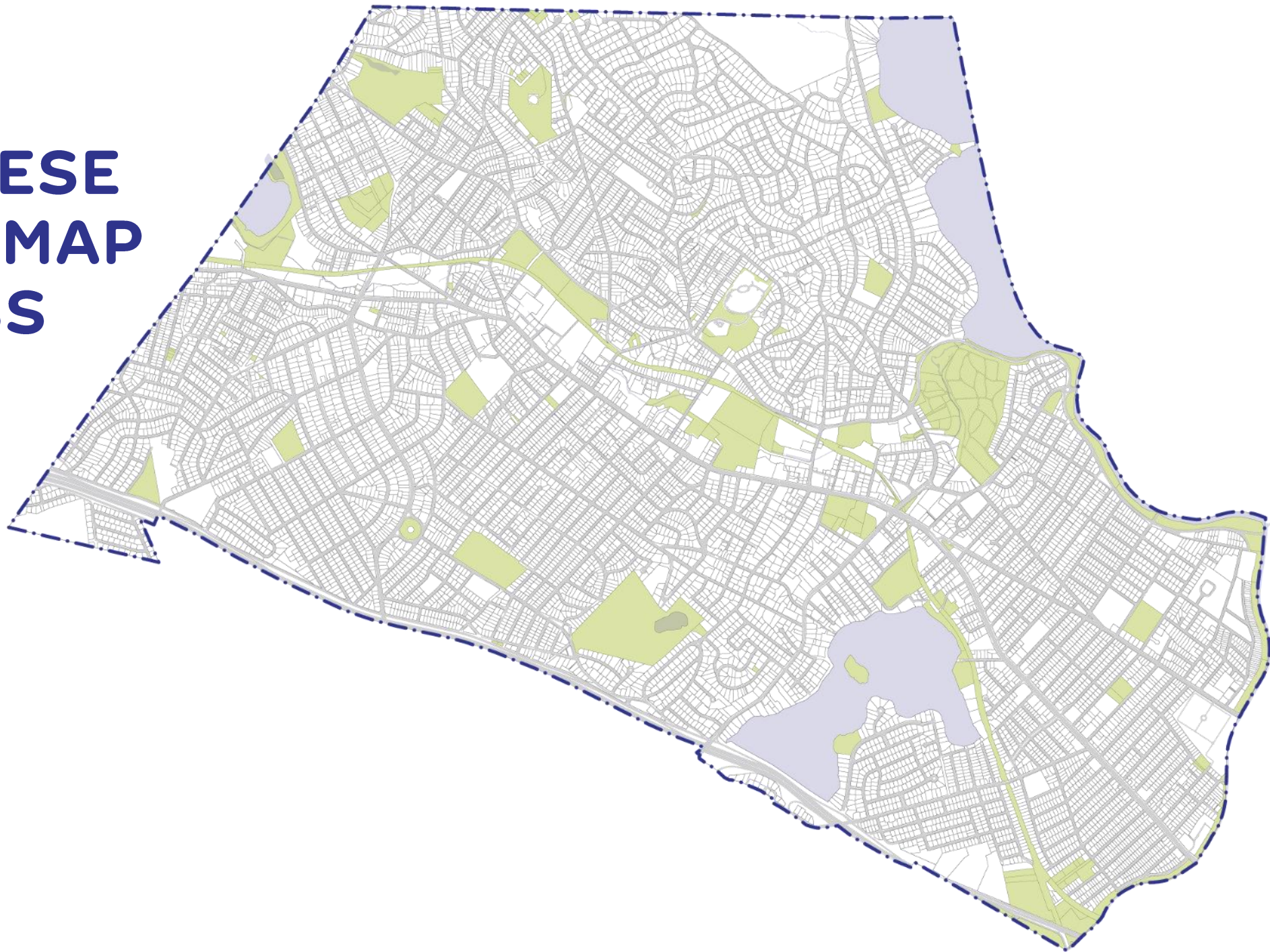
Distribute  
multifamily  
housing across  
town or focus in  
one area?

What to allow by right:  
3 units, 6 units, or  
more?



# HOW DO THESE PRIORITIES MAP OUT ACROSS TOWN?

Organizing  
principles  
for future  
discussion





# COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Locating multifamily  
districts along  
commercial  
corridors?





# COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Locating multifamily  
districts along  
commercial  
corridors?

Should industrial  
and business  
parcels be  
exempt?

Red and pink parcels are our  
business districts, purple is our  
industrial district, green is our  
open space





# COMMERCIAL ADJACENT

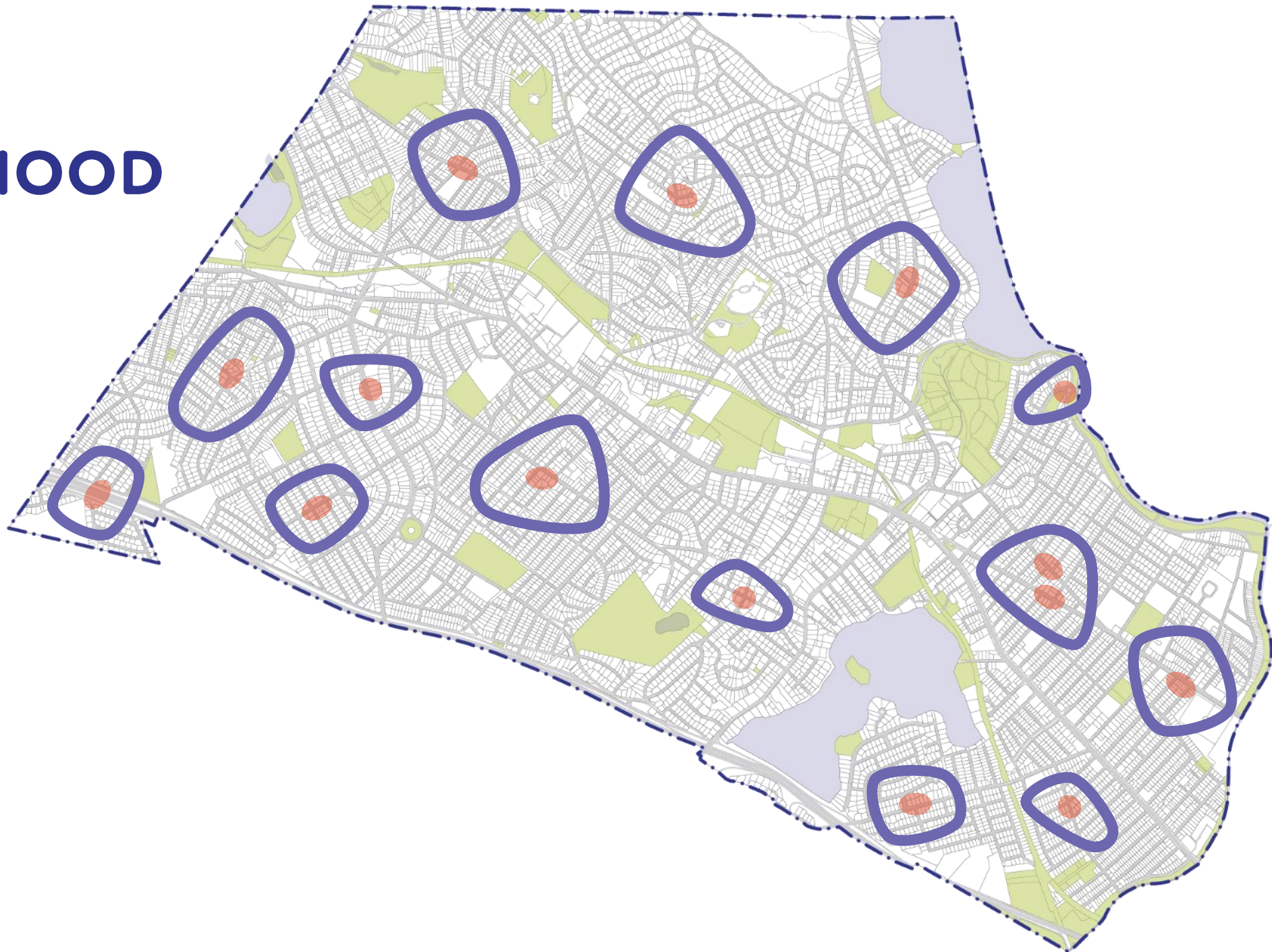
Or would setting  
the district back  
from the corridors  
be more  
appropriate?





# NEIGHBORHOOD CLUSTERS

Distribute districts  
across  
neighborhoods,  
allowing  
subdistricts with  
neighborhood-  
serving commercial?





# ACTIVE-TRANSIT CORRIDORS

Would locating  
adjacent to the  
bikeway encourage  
more active  
transportation  
use?





# ACTIVE-TRANSIT CORRIDORS

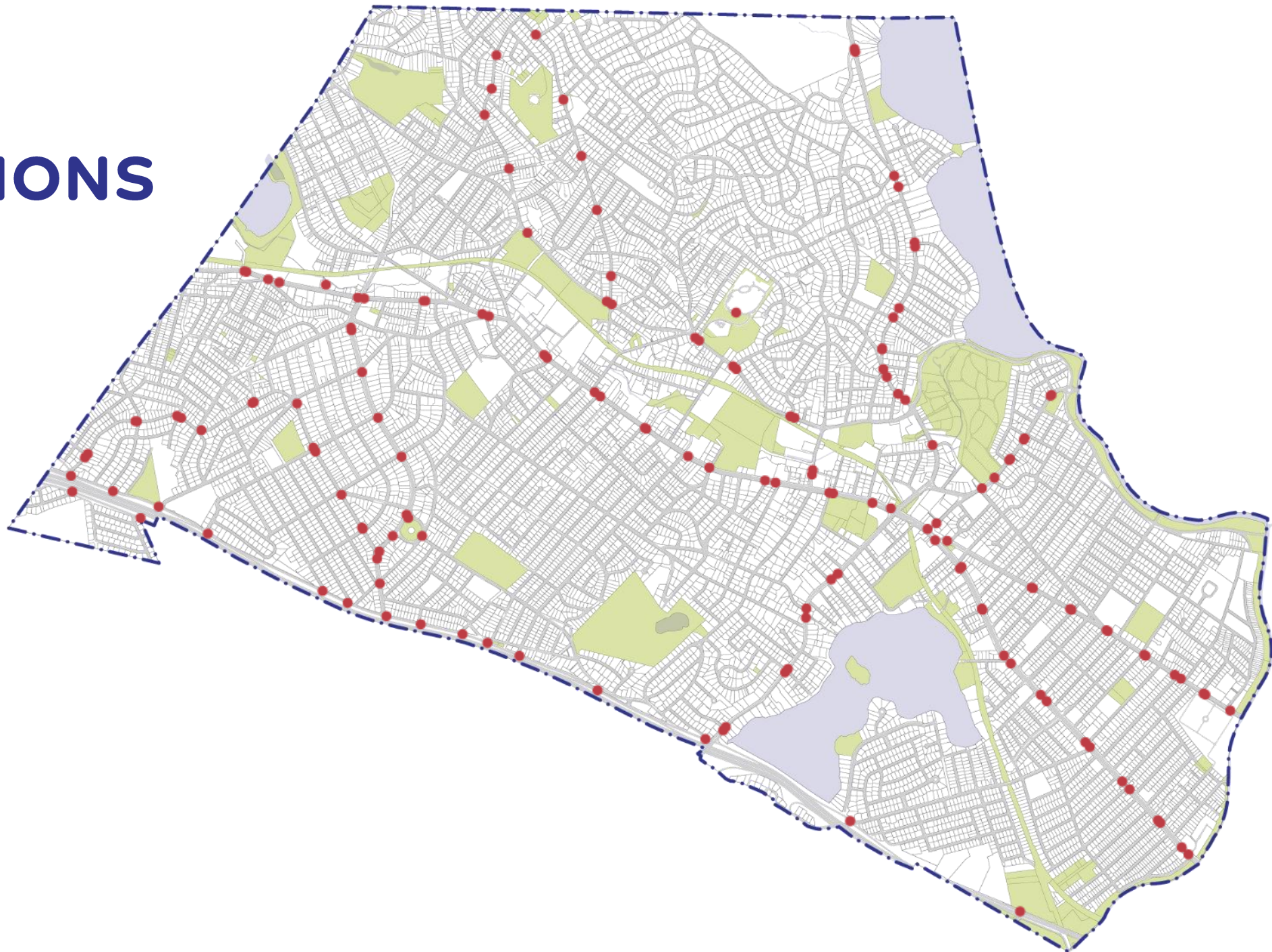
Should locating  
districts along  
other multi-use  
paths be  
considered?





# MBTA STATIONS

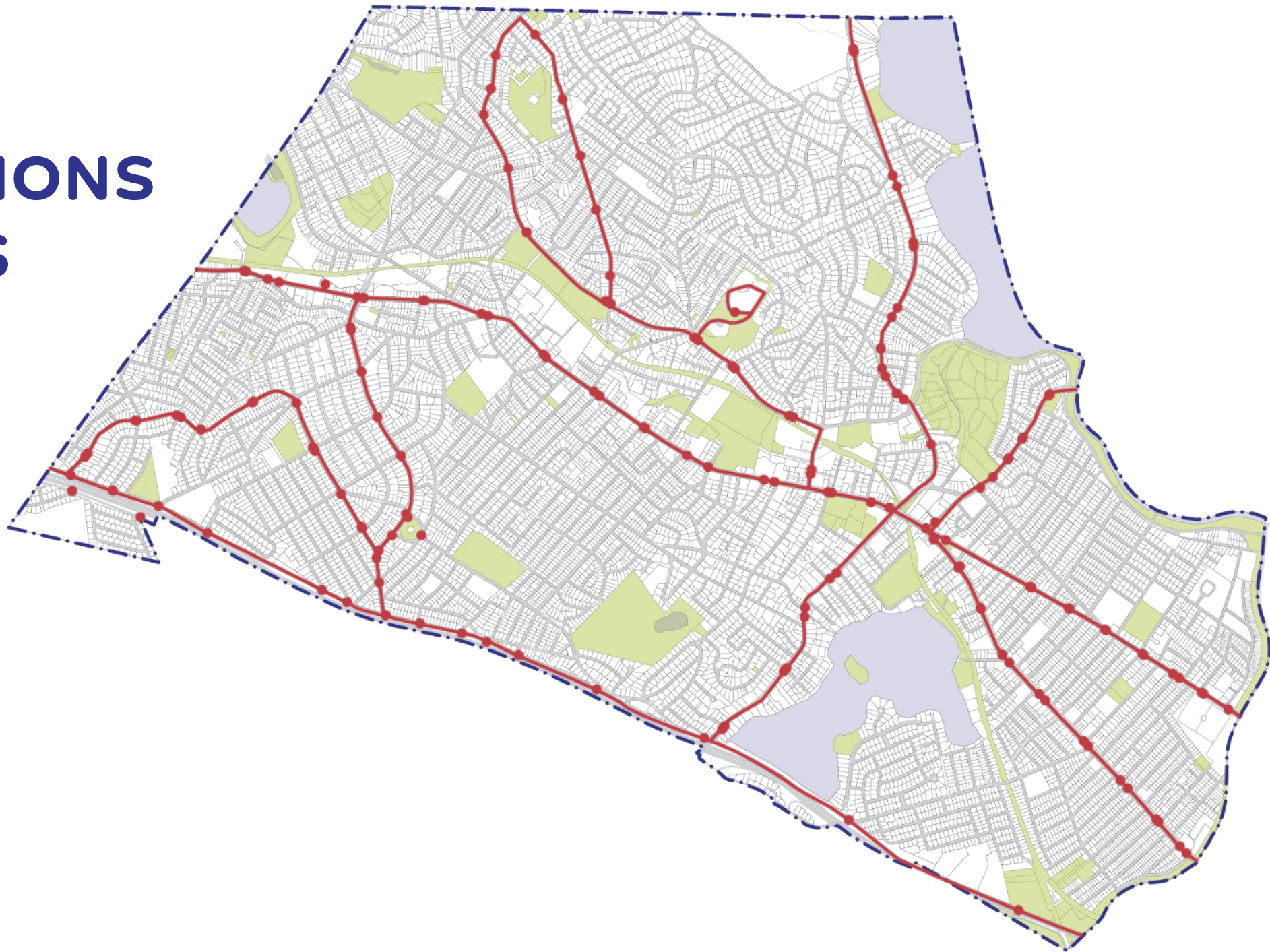
Or could additional bus ridership be encouraged by locating the districts around bus stops?





# MBTA STATIONS + BUS LINES

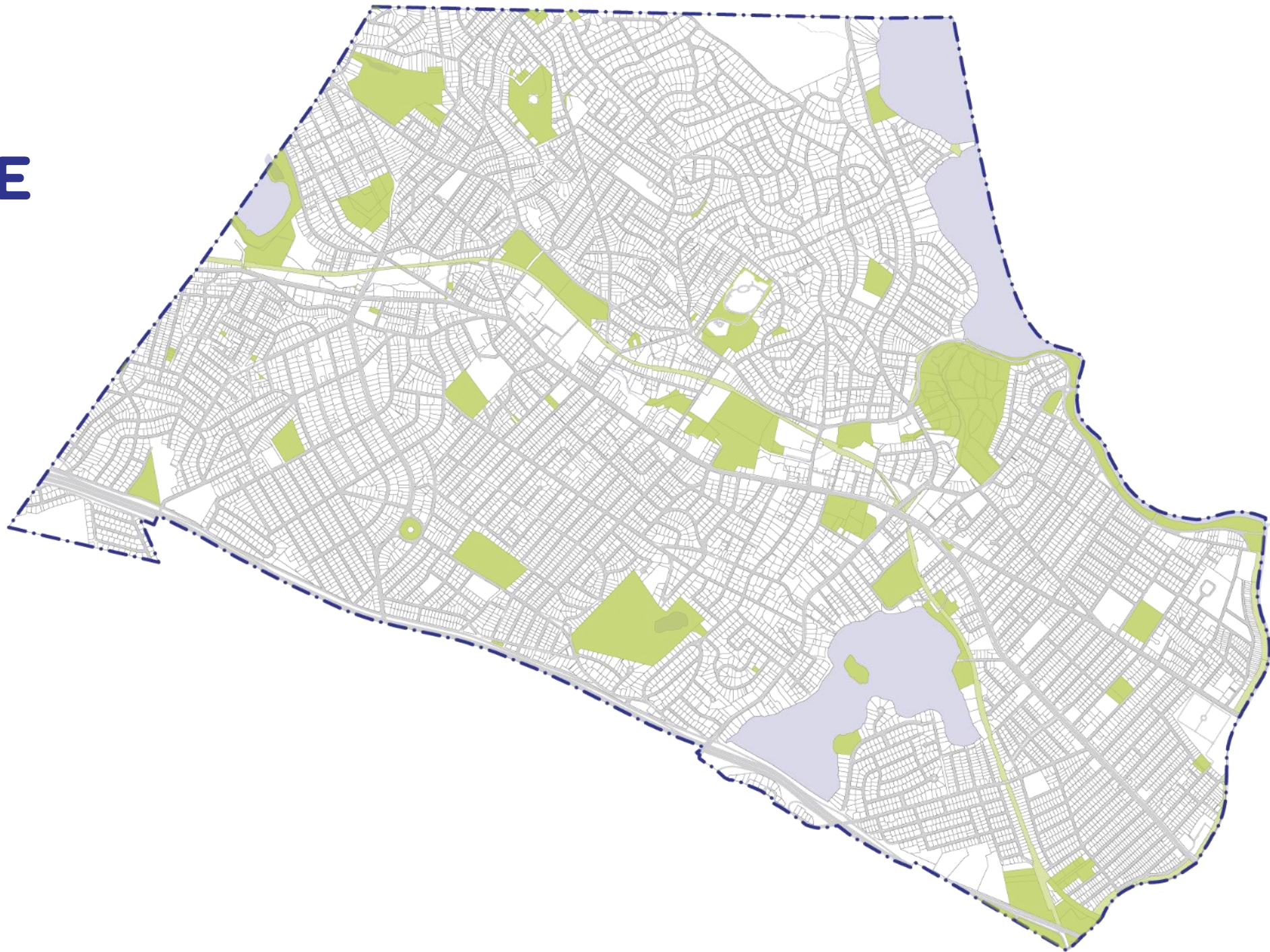
Or around bus lines?





# OPEN SPACE ADJACENT

Preserving open  
space is critical





# OPEN SPACE ADJACENT

So could districts be located in the residential areas adjacent to these resources to provide equitable access to parks and open space?



# WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?

Encourage transit  
and/or bicycling use?

Preserve commercial  
and industrial  
spaces?

Incentivize  
additional  
affordable  
housing?

Achieve goals from  
other plans through  
MBTA compliance?

Spread access  
across different open  
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Allow conversion of  
large homes to 3+  
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Distribute  
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What to allow by right:  
3 units, 6 units, or  
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Incentivize more  
mixed use and/or  
neighborhood commercial?



# LET'S TALK

Please share your questions and comments

Claire Ricker, Director, DPCD: [cricker@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:cricker@town.arlington.ma.us)

Kelly Lynema, Assistant Director, DPCD: [klynema@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:klynema@town.arlington.ma.us)



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